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NORTHAM PARK REUSE STUDY

Dorchester
N868
1970

NORTHAM PARK REUSE STUDY

JUNE, 1970

Boston Redevelopment Authority
Planning Department
District Planning Program

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BACKGROUND

This study has been undertaken to review the development potential of a blighted and partially vacant, 1.3 acre tract of land in the Ashmont Section of Dorchester. The site came to the BRA's attention in January, 1970, when the Boston Edison Company requested that several city-owned parcels along Northam Park be released for construction of a $1,000,000 transformer facility.

After a preliminary investigation of the area, the BRA Planning Staff feels that, although the Northam Park site would be appropriate for a transformer installation, it also would be a desirable location for elderly housing.

ANALYSIS

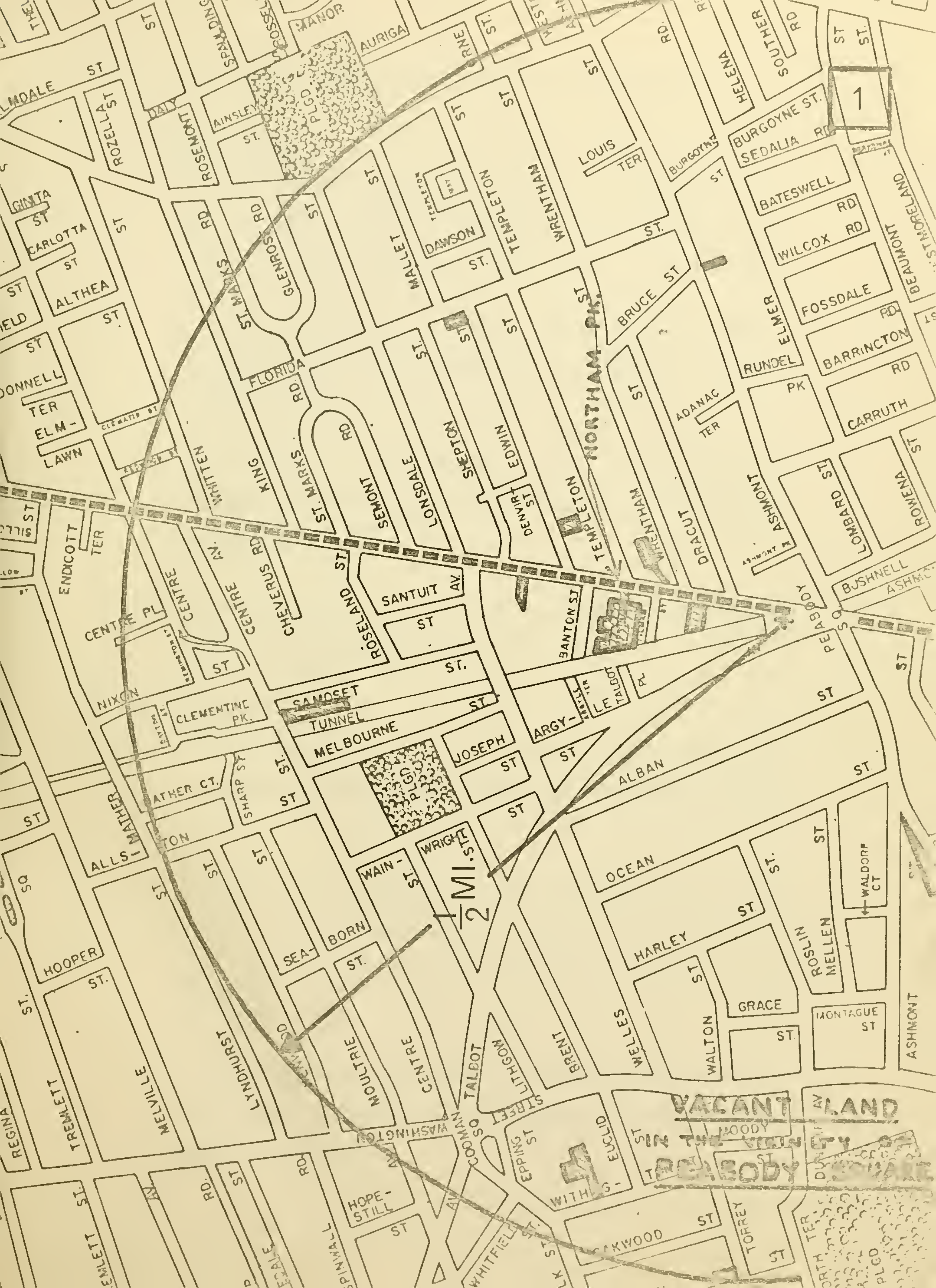
A. Transformer Installation

1. According to Boston Edison engineers, electrical demands in the Ashmont area will overload the present system in two years if a new sub-station is not built within that time.

2. The transformer must be located north of Peabody Square but not more than one-half mile distant. The site under consideration is the only large parcel within that radius (see Map 1).

3. The facility must be situated as near as possible to Edison's trunk line in Dorchester Avenue.

4. The sub-station will require approximately 13,000 square feet of land.


VACANT LAND IN THE VICINITY OF PEABODY SQUARE
1
1/2 MI.
PEABODY SQ
NORTHAM PK.
PLGD
PLGD
ALLS-TON
COOMAN SQ
TALBOT STREET
WASHINGTON
AURIGA
MANOR
SPAULDING
ROSEMONT
AINSLEY
DALY
ROZELLA ST
GINITA ST
CARLOTTA
ALTHEA
DONNELL
ELM-LAWN TER
ST MARKS RD
GLENROSE RD
MALLET ST
DAWSON ST
TEMPLETON ST
WRENTHAM ST
LOUIS TER
BURGOYNE ST.
SEDALIA RD
HELENA
SOUTHER RD
BATESWELL
WILCOX RD
FOSSDALE RD
BARRINGTON RD
CARRUTH
BEAUMONT
WESTMORELAND
ELMER
RUNDEL PK
BRUCE ST
ADANAC TER
DRACUT
ASHMONT
ASHMONT PK
LOMBARD ST
ROWENA ST
BUSHNELL
FLORIDA
WHITTEN
KING
SEMONT
LONSDALE
SHEPTON
EDWIN
DENVIR ST
BANTON ST
ENDICOTT TER
CENTRE PL
CENTRE
CENTRE AV.
CHEVERUS RD
ROSELAND ST
SANTUIT AV.
NIXON
REMINGTON ST
CLEMENTINE PK.
SAMOSET
TUNNEL
MELBOURNE
JOSEPH
ARGYLE
ARGYLE TER
TALBOT PL
ALBAN
MATHER
MATHER CT.
SHARP ST
WAIN-WRIGHT ST
SEA-BORN
OCEAN
HARLEY
ROSLIN
MELLEN
WALDORF CT
GRACE
MONTAGUE ST
WALTON
WELLES
BRENT
LITHGOW
MOULTRIE
LYNDHURST
MELVILLE
TREMLETT
HOOPER
REGINA
EPPING ST
EUCLID
WITHINGTON
HOPESTILL
MOODY
OAKWOOD
TORREY
WHITFIELD
ASPINWALL

5. The installation will be valued at about $1,000,000.

B. Elderly Housing

1. The need for elderly housing in Boston is critical. (The Boston Housing Authority currently has a three year waiting list of elderly persons desiring admission to its projects).

2. The BHA has requested assistance from the BRA in finding suitable sites for the construction of additional units of elderly housing.

3. The sites should be at least one acre in size and should be located near shopping, transportation and other supportive facilities.

4. If the project is to be high-rise, a minimum of 72 units are required to justify an elevator.

C. Area Description

1. The Northam Park site is located near the center of Ashmont, a residential neighborhood consisting of approximately 12,000 people.

2. Ashmont has many commercial outlets and professional offices located along Dorchester Avenue with the largest establishments situated at Peabody Square in the immediate vicinity of the Northam Park Site.

3. The generally good housing and environmental conditions in Ashmont are being marred by the blighting influences in the Northam Park area.

4. With approximately 1,500 residents over 65 years of age, Ashmont ranks among the top five sub-areas in the Dorchester district in terms of elderly population. (The population within a one-mile radius of the site is estimated to be in excess of 50,000 persons of which more than 6,000 are over 65).

5. Public transportation in the area is excellent. A bus line runs along Dorchester Avenue from Ashmont to Andrew Square, and the Ashmont MBTA station is just a few minutes walking distance from the site.

D. Site Description

1. Size and Topography (see Map 2)

The site contains approximately 56,500 square feet. The land generally is level, although it slopes somewhat from Dorchester Avenue to the MBTA tunnel along the tract's western boundary.

2. Existing land use and building conditions (see Maps 3 and 4)

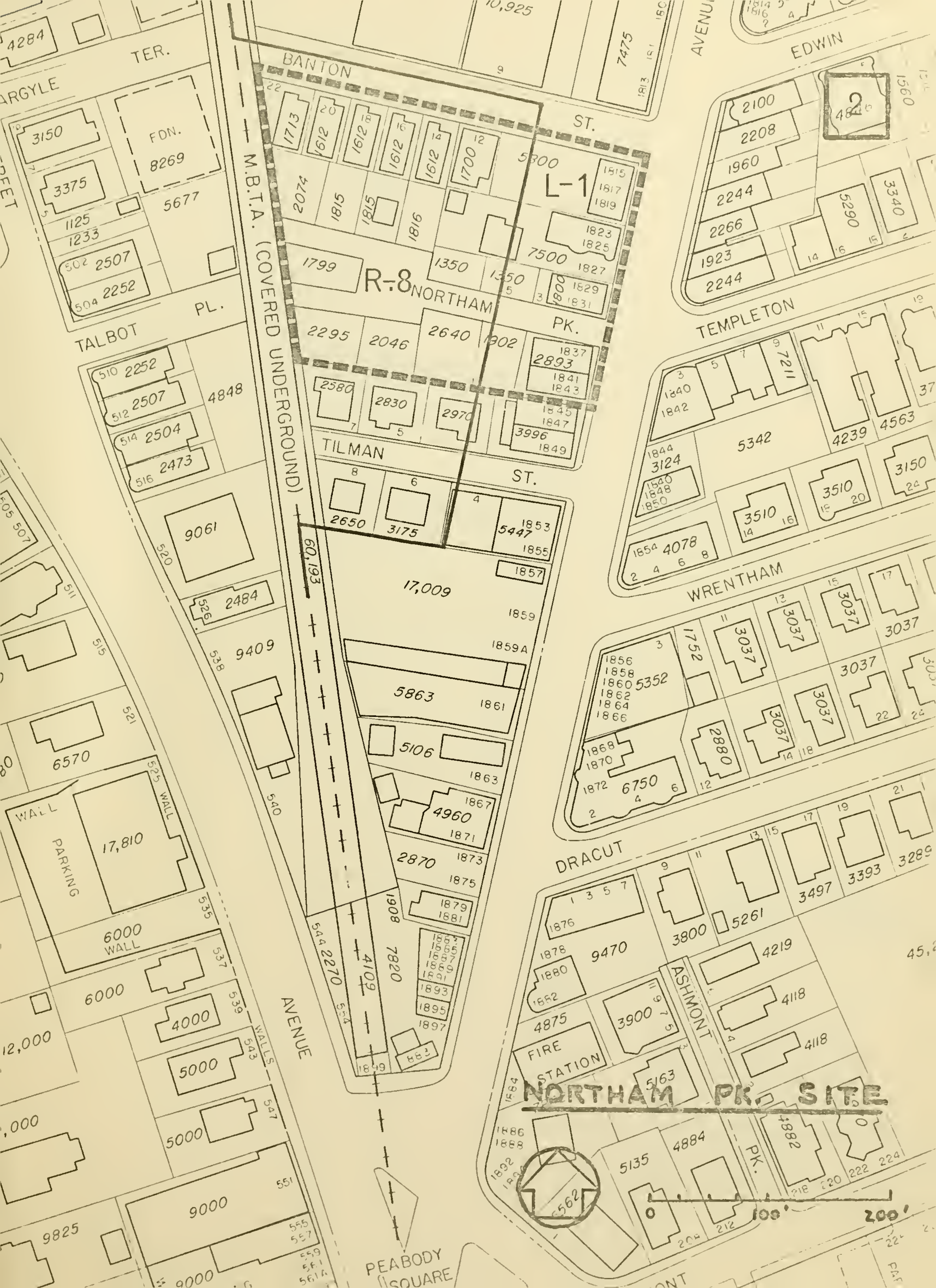
The area under consideration represents a pocket of blight in an otherwise sound residential neighborhood. A little under one half of the site is occuppied by eleven buildings, all of which are in fair to poor condition. The remaining 53% consists of vacant land (including the existing right-of-way for Northam Park, an unimproved dead-end street).

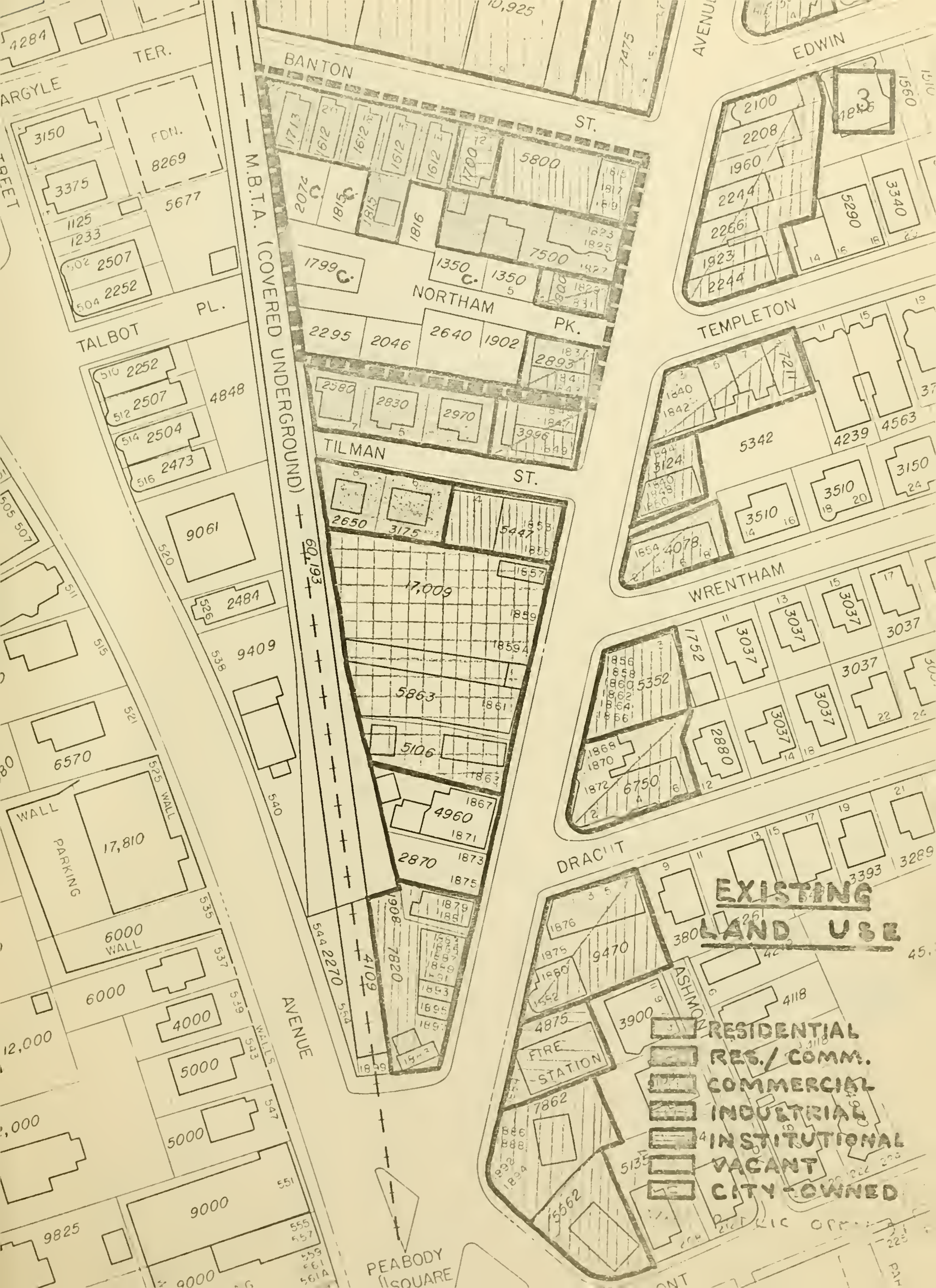
While most of the buildings are used for residential purposes, a number of them contain non-residential uses. Of the latter

uses, only one (a dry cleaning establishment) provides service to the neighborhood. The others (an aluminum company, a welding firm and a storage shed) tend to be more oriented to warehousing or light industrial classifications.

3. Present Zoning

Part of the site is zoned for local business (L-1). The remainder is in a residential zone (R-.8). (see Map 2).


NORTHAM PK. SITE



EXISTING LAND USE
RESIDENTIAL
RES./COMM.
COMMERCIAL
INDUSTRIAL
INSTITUTIONAL
VACANT
CITY-OWNED
M.B.T.A. (COVERED UNDERGROUND)
ARGYLE TER.
TALBOT PL.
BANTON ST.
NORTHAM PK.
TILMAN ST.
EDWIN
TEMPLETON
WRENTHAM
DRACUT
ASHMONT
AVENUE
PEABODY SQUARE
FIRE STATION
FDN.
PARKING
WALL
3

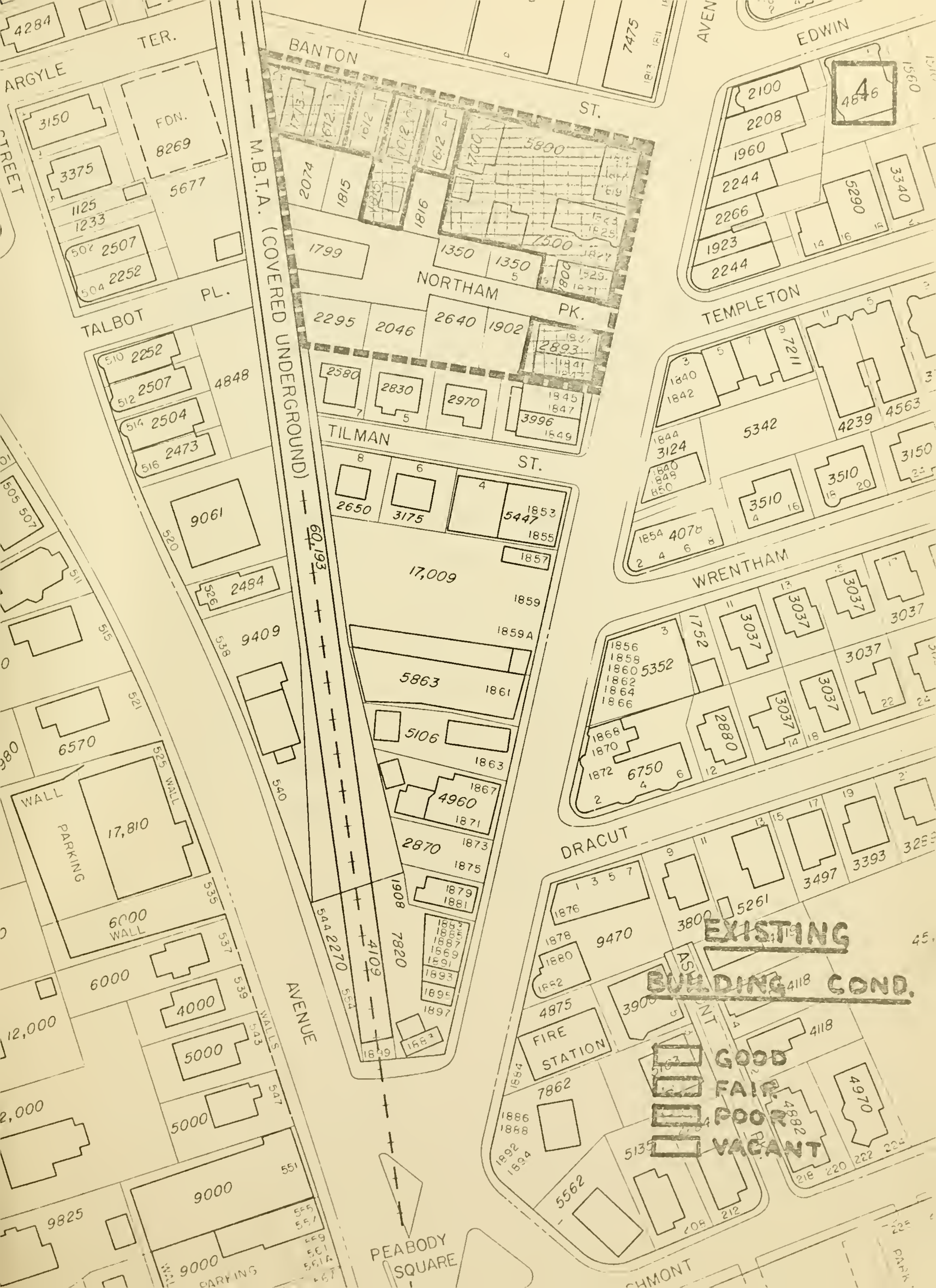

4
EXISTING
BUILDING COND.
GOOD
FAIR
POOR
VACANT
ARGYLE
TER.
STREET
BANTON
ST.
EDWIN
AVEN
M.B.T.A. (COVERED UNDERGROUND)
TALBOT
PL.
NORTHAM
PK.
TEMPLETON
TILMAN
ST.
WRENTHAM
DRACUT
AVENUE
FIRE STATION
PARKING
WALL
WALLS
PEABODY SQUARE
CHMONT
FDN.
8269
5890
7500
17,009
5863
5106
4960
2870
7820
4109
2270
60,193
17,810
6000
9470
4875
7862
5562
5342
5352
6750
9061
9409
4848
5677
9000
9825
12,000

TABLE I

REUSE STUDY NORTHAM PARK - BUILDING DATA

PARCEL NO.	NO. OF STORIES	TYPE OF CONSTRUCTION	CONDITION	USE	NO. OF DU'S	NON-RESIDENTIAL USES
1494	3	Frame	Poor	Residential	3	- - - -
1495	3	Frame	Poor	Residential	3	- - - -
1496	3	Frame	Fair	Residential	3	- - - -
1497	3	Frame	Poor	Residential	3	- - - -
1506	1	Frame	Poor	Shed	-	Storage
1498	3	Frame	Fair	Residential	3	- - - -
1499	1	Frame	Poor	Commercial	-	Ashmont Welding
1500	1	Brick	Poor	Commercial	-	Plymouth Cleaners
1501	3	Frame	Poor	Residential	3	- - - -
1501	2½	Frame	Poor	Residential	1	- - - -
1502	3	Frame	Poor	Mixed	2	1st floor vacant
1514	3	Frame	Poor	Mixed	5	A to Z Aluminum
			TOTAL DWELLING UNITS		26	

EVALUATION

The above review indicates that several uses could be accommodated at this location. The site's proximity to public transportation, shopping, and other conveniences, however, make it especially well-suited for residential use.

Since the site is relatively small and partially zoned for commercial uses, it would seem reasonable that the most economically feasible type of development, if not commercial, would be residential of a high-rise design (perhaps 6 to 8 stories).

This would indicate that housing constructed on the site would be better suited for occupancy by adults and elderly than by families with small children. Since the need for elderly housing is serious in Boston and particularly acute in the Ashmont section of Dorchester, this site should be given serious consideration for the construction of such housing.

The Boston Edison Company, on the other hand, has a legitimate need for land in this area upon which to build its transformer facility. The Northam Park site also seems well-suited to meet this need.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based upon the considerations discussed in this study, it is recommended that the Northam Park site be assembled and cleared for the development of high-rise elderly housing along with the Boston Edison electrical transformer installation. The following guidelines are suggested to ensure that the new development will enhance the surrounding neighborhood and provide adequate access, off-street parking and usable open space. (see Map 5).

Transformer

A. The transformer (13,000 sq. ft.) should be situated to the rear of the site with access from Banton Street (Boston Edison should not rely on Northam Park for access and egress).

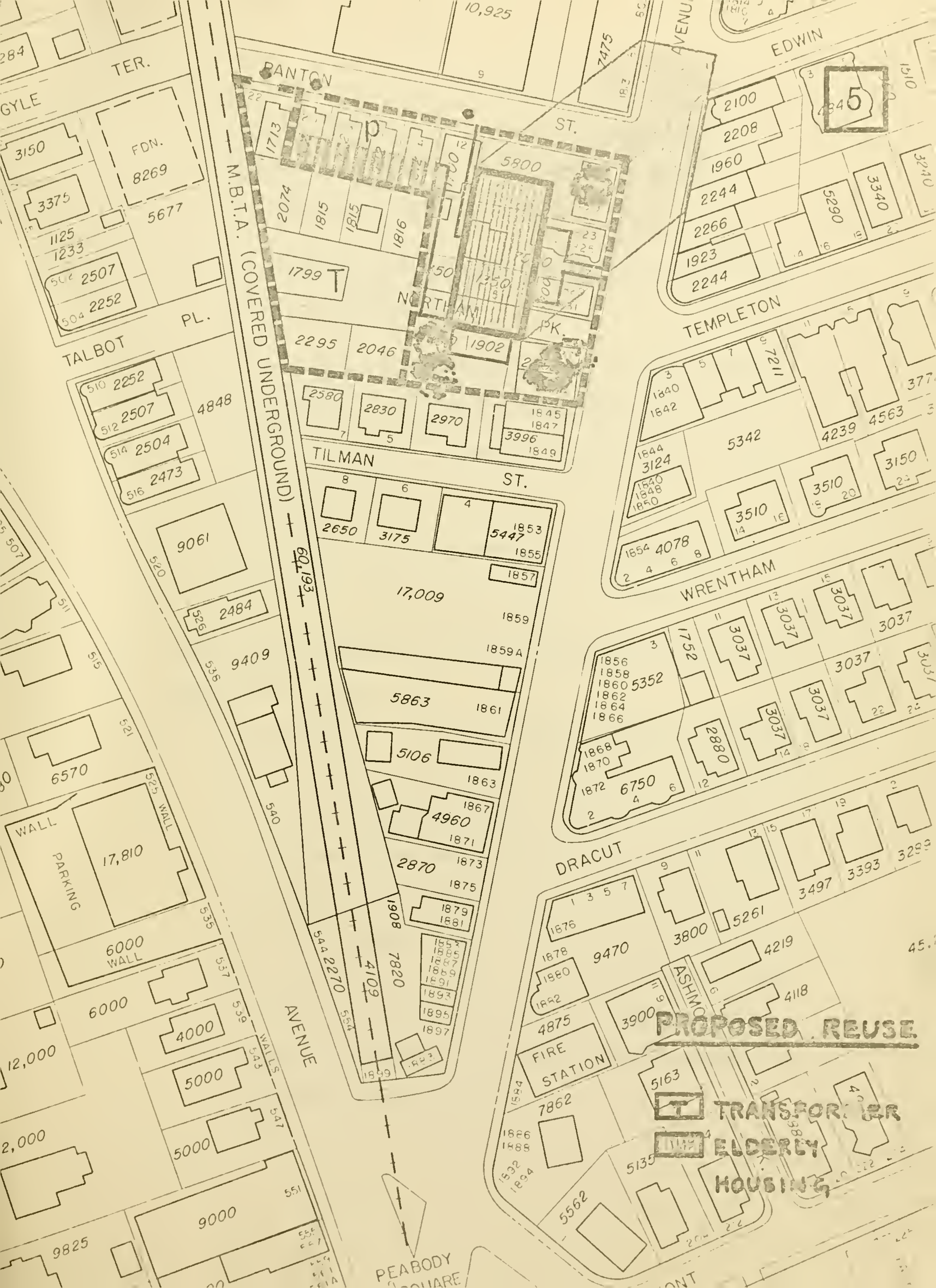
B. The transformer should be adequately screened from surrounding uses by fencing and landscaping. (Boston Edison engineers say that noise from the transformer will be no problem).

Elderly Housing

A. Following construction of the transformer, the (56,500 sq. ft.) site will be reduced to about 43,500 sq. ft. (approximately one acre). According to BHA guidelines, a site this size could accommodate up to 80 units of elderly housing.

B. It is recommended that 72 units of elderly housing be constructed as follows:

   1. Depending upon its design the project would be 6 to 8 stories in height with one elevator.


5
PROPOSED REUSE
T TRANSFORMER
ELDERLY HOUSING
BANTON ST.
NORTHAM PK.
TILMAN ST.
M.B.T.A. (COVERED UNDERGROUND)
AVENUE
ARGYLE TER.
TALBOT PL.
EDWIN
TEMPLETON
WRENTHAM
DRACUT
ASHMONT
PEABODY SQUARE
FIRE STATION
FDN.
WALL
PARKING
WALLS
5800
1750
1902
1799
2074
1815
1816
1713
2295
2046
2580
2830
2970
3996
2650
3175
5447
17,009
5863
5106
4960
2870
7820
4109
2270
60,193
3150
8269
3375
5677
2507
2252
4848
2504
2473
9061
2484
9409
6570
17,810
6000
4000
5000
12,000
9000
9825
10,925
7475
2100
2208
1960
2244
2266
1923
5290
3340
7211
5342
4239
4563
3124
3510
4078
5352
1752
3037
2880
6750
9470
3800
5261
4219
4118
3900
4875
5163
7862
5135
5562
3497
3393

2. At 0.2 off-street parking spaces per unit, 15 spaces must be provided. These along with the project's service drive, should be kept near the transformer and screened as much as possible.

3. The building might contain a cafeteria and other service rooms on the first floor.

4. If the project is properly sited, the southeastern yard could provide a pleasant, sunlit, sitting area. This area should be well-landscaped, and perhaps the cafeteria could open into it.

5. The building should be sited so that its shadow will not interfere with nearby residential properties.

C. The following alternatives might be pursued with regard to development of the housing:

   1. Boston Edison or some other private developer (including the present owners of the site or a non-profit community based group might acquire the land. Acquisition could be accomplished either through purchase on the open market (assuming that the present owners are willing to sell) or via eminent domain procedures under Section 121A of the Massachusetts Laws. Either all or a specified percentage of the units constructed could be sold under a turnkey arrangement or leased to the Boston Housing Authority for occupancy by elderly tenants.

2. The Boston Redevelopment Authority might assemble the site via a Mini Urban Renewal Project. In this case, the Boston Housing Authoirty would be responsible for constructing the new housing, which would be occupied exclusively by elderly tenants qualifying for public housing.

REUSE STUDY NORTHAM PARK - PARCEL DATA

PARCEL NO.	ADDRESS	SQ.FT.	BLDG. OR VACANT	OWNER	ASSESSED LAND	VALUE BLDG.	TOTAL
1494	22 Banton St.	1713	Bldg.	Kathleen M. Gaffney	200	3300	3500
1495	20 Banton St.	1612	Bldg.	Michael & Harriet Murphy	200	3300	3500
1496	18 Banton St.	1612	Bldg.	Barrett Realty Trust	200	3300	3500
1497	16 Banton St.	1612	Bldg.	Anthony & Domicele Zalvis	200	3300	3500
1498	14 Banton St.	1612	Bldg.	Barrett Realty Trust	200	3300	3500
1499	12 Banton St.	1700	Bldg.	Rose Doyle & Helen Walsh	400	1600	2000
1500	1815-1819 Dorch. Ave.	5800	Bldg.	Domicele Zalvis	2900	3100	6000
1501	1823-1825 Dorch. Ave. 1827 Dorch. Ave.	7500	2 Bldgs.	Allen Sibites	2600	5900	8500
1502	1829-1831 Dorch. Ave.	1800	Bldg.	Mary Ann Zalvis	900	5100	6000
1503	Rear 3 Dorch Ave.	1350	Vacant	Concord Corp.	200	0	200
1504	Rear 3 Dorch. Ave.	1350	Vacant	City of Boston	400	0	400
1505	Rear 14 Banton St.	1816	Vacant	Barrett Realty Trust	300	0	300
1506	Rear 16 Banton St.	1815	Bldg.	Anthony & Domicele Zalvis	300	200	500
1507	Rear 18 Banton St.	1815	Vacant	City of Boston	600	0	600
1508	Rear 22 Banton St.	2074	Vacant	City of Boston	700	0	700
1509	Adjacent MBTA Underground Tunnel	1799	Vacant	City of Boston	600	0	600

REUSE STUDY NORTHAM PARK - PARCEL DATA

PARCEL NO.	ADDRESS	SQ.FT.	BLDG. OR VACANT	OWNER	ASSESSED LAND	VALUE BLDG.	TOTAL
1510	Rear 7 Tilman St.	2295	Vacant	Mary & Anthony Zalvis	300	0	300
1511	Rear 5 Tilman St.	2046	Vacant	Mary Ann Zalvis	300	0	300
1512	Rear 3 Tilman St.	2640	Vacant	Mary Ann Zalvis	400	0	400
1513	Rear 1837-43 Dorch. Ave.	1902	Vacant	Mary Ann Zalvis	300	0	300
1514	1837-1843 Dorch. Ave.	2893	Bldg.	Mary Ann Zalvis	1400	6600	8000

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